

Hand in Hand...
Linking Lives



May / June 2024

GOT—GROWING OLDER TOGETHER

570 630 0509 830 Main St. #574 Honesdale, PA 18431 www.growingoldertogether.org

*If you need
something, just ask!*



Healing, Patience, Friendship

by Thomas Cambridge

Twelve weeks ago, before a significant surgery to install a titanium cage and a few giant screws into my lower spine, my neurosurgeon told me to expect a three-month recovery period. Which means I am now at the end of that recovery period. But twelve weeks ago, the enormity didn't quite sink in, amidst the flurry of preparations and a maelstrom of emotions.

For example - I am single, live alone and am without children. Fortunately, I have some amazing friends. And I needed them, as a great deal of post-op care was involved. Many came forward before I even asked for help. Someone suggested I post a sign-up sheet on-line where folks could offer to bring food, walk Maude my dog, or come visit. That was an excellent suggestion! I watched my computer screen as a month's worth of tasks were snatched up - a digital testament to the depth of friendship and the

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power of community. It reminded me of the extraordinary work done by our volunteers and call managers at Growing Older Together. While I may not yet be a member, I can see it coming.

Gratefully, the surgery went as expected, though the recovery was far from linear. At about the two-week mark, I was still in significant pain. Shouldn't it have subsided at least a little, I thought? Twelve weeks really started to sink in. I was in it for the long haul. It was still February then and as I looked out my window at the brown meadow, I likened my experience to lying fallow, just like the Earth. That made it easier to accept, for as Earth springs back to life, so would I.

Despite the intense post-surgical pain, it was worth it. Four years of chronic sciatica gone just like that, a miracle of modern medicine. I still need patience, however. Patience to give healing time when it seems to be going backwards. I believe in prayer and I pray for patience. A lot!

I made it through the twelve weeks, and Nature and I have indeed sprung back. I keep a copy of that sign-up sheet, if ever I need to be reminded of the importance of good friends.



(Thomas Cambridge is Executive Director of Growing Older Together, pictured here with Maude.)

Restaurant of Mistaken Orders

by Marileta Robinson

One day in 2013 a young Japanese TV presenter named Shiro Oguni sat down for lunch at a group home for people with dementia, where he was filming a news feature. By the time he finished his meal, an exciting idea had been born.

The group home was unusual because its clients were given the opportunity to do meaningful work, such as their own shopping and cooking and cleaning. It didn't matter if they did these things perfectly. They were able to "keep living their lives."

Oguni had ordered a hamburger steak for his lunch, but he was served a plate of pot-sticker dumplings instead. He was about to return the mistaken order when he realized that under the circumstances, it was better to just enjoy the meal he had been given. Human connection and kindness were more important than rigid expectations of perfection.

Moved by his experience, Oguni wanted to share this insight with others by creating a place where people with dementia could comfortably mingle with the public at large. A few years later, he teamed up with the director of the group home, Yukio Wada, to launch the "Restaurant of Mistaken Orders," where people with dementia were employed as servers. Dementia is defined as a decline in memory, learning, and communication skills caused by Alzheimer's disease and other conditions. "Dementia is so widely misunderstood," Oguni said. "People believe you can't do anything for yourself. The condition will often bring about complete isolation from society. We want to change society to become more caring and easy going, so dementia or no dementia, we can live together in harmony."

The restaurant's name was intended to help customers arrive with a mindset of tolerance and good humor. "If your order was mistaken, you can shrug it off with a smile and enjoy what comes your way, anyway," explained Oguni. It worked. The team launched a pop-up Restaurant of Mistaken Orders in Tokyo in September 2017. The reactions of the customers and the servers at that event, captured on a video available on the group's website: <http://www.mistakenorders.com/en/home.html>, are remarkable and heartwarming. Laughter and smiles abound from customers and servers. A 90-year-old server observes, "I was worried. I wasn't sure I could do this job. It's been just wonderful."

The launch was a great success. According to the website, "37% of our orders were mistaken, but 99% of our customers said they were happy." Since 2017, hundreds of "dementia cafes" have opened in Japan, as well as in China, Korea, and elsewhere. Perhaps one day we will see such cafes here. These volunteer-run venues provide a place where people with dementia can find a renewed feeling of worth and community, while helping to break down the stereotypes that keep them isolated from others--just as Shiro Oguni had hoped, years ago, as he ate his mistaken order.

(Marileta Robinson is a GOT volunteer living in Milanville, Pennsylvania.)

What's That Sound: Woodpecker Alert

by Mary Greene

One night in early April, I awoke to the sound of a woodpecker drilling into a tree in my forested yard--not an unusual sound for those of us living in the country.

A few days later, I noticed a pine tree that had unusual markings on its trunk, half a foot wide, winding up five or six feet. I couldn't imagine what had made these markings. I wondered if a spring bear was marking its territory, but it didn't look like that. As I got a closer look, I saw that the bark was stripped away and there were lots of wood chips at the base of the tree. I also noticed what looked like holes in the stripped away wood.

My gardener, an experienced naturalist, told me the markings were made by a woodpecker. It seemed hard to believe that one bird could be so strong and determined. But a few days later, I observed a Pileated Woodpecker making its way to the pine and continuing its spring harvest.

This is the same "Woody Woodpecker" that so many of us watched on childhood cartoons, created by Walter Lantz, an American motion-picture animator and cartoon producer. In nature, the Pileated Woodpecker is a large bird with a long neck and a triangular crest that sweeps off the back of the head. The bill is long and chisel-like, about the length of its head. In flight, the wings are broad and the bird can seem crowlike. Pileated Woodpeckers drill distinctive rectangular-shaped holes in rotten wood to get at carpenter ants and other insects. They are loud birds with a distinctive whinnying call along with their woodpecker drill.

Woodpeckers can be annoying to humans when they peck on wooden house sidings. They sometimes attack a window when the reflection leads them to believe there is a competitor behind the glass. Other birds will do this, too.

Some woodpeckers, who are of varying size and coloration, will mix their diet with fruits, birds' eggs, small animals, tree sap, food scraps, and carrion. They usually nest and roost in holes they excavate in tree trunks. Their abandoned holes are also important to other cavity-nesting birds.

Pileated woodpeckers can do a significant amount of damage to trees. The good news is that, like most woodpeckers, they tend to target trees that are dead or have a lot of decay in them. Pileated Woodpeckers have tongues containing backward facing barbs that they can stick into an insect gallery to drag out the occupants for a meal. They can leave a pile of good-sized wood chips at the base of trees, in which they're feeding. The photo shows an example of the damage that they can do.

Trees can survive a woodpecker attack, although the damage may come more slowly from within. My pine tree looks pretty good after its encounter with the magnificent Pileated Woodpecker. But what do I know?



Time will tell, for this tree--and for all the trees in our precious woods.

(Mary Greene is a poet, author, and frequent contributor to the GOT newsletter.)

Seeing The Real India

by Jan Goodwin

“Photos are not made with the camera. They are made with the eye, heart, and head,” was famously said by world renowned 20th century French photographer and artist Henri Cartier-Bresson. Those words resonate with GOT member Doug Hilson, whose photos taken in India are worthy of the *National Geographic*, as these three samples show. Hilson, who now lives in Callicoon Center, NY, is professor emeritus of fine arts at Long Island’s Hofstra University where he taught for 24 years, after moving there from the School of Art and Design, at the University of Illinois.



Beginning in 1992, Doug started visiting India, and since then he has returned 12 times for long trips. For him the aesthetic impact was immediate, and India continues to inform his work. “My first trip

was visually overwhelming, but I loved everything about the place, the warmth of people, the gorgeous faces of the children, so many different ethnicities. The villages, museums and temples, the cows, camels, elephants, goats, the smell of burning dung used to cook or heat. The spectacularly colorful markets. The first place I go to in India are the markets. To me, they give one a sense of the real India. The colors are a photographer's dream. The street life is fantastic. When I land there, I come alive."

Despite the superb quality and feeling of his photographs, Doug, now 82, is blind in one eye since suffering a detached retina. Following multiple surgeries, he no longer has any depth perception. The vision in his left eye is also very weak due to hereditary macular degeneration. "I can no longer drive, or read or write on my laptop," he says. "For my photographs, I now use my very nice Nikon 400 mg camera lens, which magnifies everything eight times. I can see quite well through that lens." His magnificent collection of 60,000 India prints testifies to that. So did his photography exhibition at the Catskill Arts Society in Livingston Manor and at the Indian Consulate in Manhattan. Doug also posts his photos on 30 photo sites, as well as Facebook. Before he took up photography, he was an award-winning artist whose paintings, some as large as 7 ft x 8 ft, have been exhibited both in this country and in Europe.

Doug and his wife Danielle have thought of renting a house for a month or two annually in Shimla, in Northern India, with its snow-capped Himalayan peaks. Shimla was the summer capital of India during British rule because its elevation of 7,500 ft enabled colonials to escape searing summer heat before air-conditioning existed.

One of his favorite states is Rajasthan, famous for its vibrant culture and historic architecture, its opulent palaces, historic forts and temples. Doug had spent some time there photographing children whose names he never knew. When he returned four years later, he took with him a portfolio of his large colored prints. Looking at the second page, a little boy started shouting: "My sister, my sister!" Within minutes the child's entire family came running, so did those of the other 48 children Doug had photographed previously.

(Jan Goodwin is an award-winning author, journalist and GOT volunteer.)

Everyone has a story: Tell us yours

by Jan Goodwin

Oh, so many years ago, when I was a cub reporter for a London, England, weekly newspaper, I remember my editor-in-chief cautioning me as I ran out the door on my first assignment, "Remember," he said, "Everyone, no matter who, has a story."

And indeed from Thucydides, the Athenian historian and general 3,000 years ago, to bestselling authors Frank McCourt and Anne Lamott who've said it much more recently, yes, indeed everyone does. As of course so did GOT member Doug Hilson above. And no doubt you do, too.

So if you have a story you think other GOT members would like to hear, let me know. Go to my website: jangoodwin.com, and scroll down to the bottom of the left column and click on "Contact." Here, you can put your name, phone number and email, and a sentence or two about your story. Or phone GOT at : 570-630-0509 and give your phone number to whomever answers, tell them why you are calling, and I will call you back. We'd love to hear from you.

(Jan Goodwin, editor of the GOT newsletter)

A Round of Applause – Please!

by Thomas Cambridge

We wish to extend our heartfelt appreciation to our colleague Marcia Nehemiah for her dedication and tireless efforts which have left an indelible mark on GOT. From her roles as President, Call Manager Trainer, Volunteer, and most recently, Editor of our Newsletter, Marcia's passion for our mission and unwavering commitment have inspired us all. As she pursues other interests, we express our deepest gratitude and wish her all the best in her future endeavors.

With Marcia's departure, we are thrilled to welcome Jan Goodwin as our new Editor. Jan brings a wealth of experience and expertise to this role, having achieved acclaim as an award-winning journalist and author with a global reach. Her illustrious career includes covering 17 wars, as well as interviews with heads of state, royalty, and celebrities. One of her books: Price of Honor is designated "Notable" by the New York Times. Jan's dedication to GOT is evident in her multifaceted involvement as a Call Manager, Volunteer and GOT Member.

Thank you, Marcia and Jan!

Save the date! Lavapalooza! Is Saturday, August 3rd, Second District Brew Farm, Fallsdale, PA.



Live music, food, games, auction & raffle! More details to come!

Your **tax-deductible donation** will go a long way in sustaining GOT as we continue to fulfill our mission: to give residents aged 60 and older who live in Wayne County, PA, western Sullivan County, NY, and surrounding areas both the practical means and the social connections to live independently in their homes. GOT is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Any amount, large or small, is welcome. Please visit our website and click the **Donate** button, or mail your check to GOT, 830 Main Street #574, Honesdale, PA 18431. Thank you in advance for your support.

Please help spread the word about the benefits of becoming a member and/or volunteer for GOT. If you know a friend or neighbor who might want to offer a helping hand or might benefit from one, share our phone number, 570-630-0509, and/or our web address:

www.growingoldertogether.org Thank you!

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Diversity is a Source of Strength, Creativity, and Innovation Growing Older Together is committed to fostering an environment that welcomes and values every person and respects all identities, cultures, heritages, and abilities.